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Best Practices for Language Revitalization – Part 1

This is the first of a four-part series. *Re-posted from June 23, 2014*



What are Best Practices in Language Revitalization?

The term “Best Practices” means simply, “Here are methods that have been found to be most effective.”

First, there are several critical factors to consider when planning to preserve and/or revitalize an endangered language.

- How many speakers are still living?
- What is the average age of a speaker?
- How many potential speakers have been identified?
- Are there speakers who are willing to be teachers?
- How much documentation – text and audio – has already been done?
- Is there an infrastructure for language education?

You can evaluate your language’s level of endangerment by checking the **Four Levels of Endangerment** identified by **UNESCO**.

You can see that there must be adults and elders able to transmit the language to children, for revitalization to take hold.

That said, the Conservancy has found that when setting a language program in motion, there are five areas that need careful attention for success; so much so that putting attention and resources into these areas is considered following Best Practices.

Five Best Practices

- Linguistics: develop pedagogically correct curriculum and literature for the language at all its levels and across a range of uses.



- Instruction: re-train existing language teachers and develop a new language teacher corps utilizing proven teaching methodologies.



- Education: start with a standard, sequenced second language curriculum to lay the ground work for a population of second-language speakers and eventual Lakota-media instruction generated by those speakers: texts, audio and video.



- Oversight: provide accountability by conducting pre-and post-testing of language proficiency in schools at sequenced intervals of instruction.



- Social Support: promote and support language use beyond the schools – in homes and public spaces.



What tribes use these Best Practices? — [More in Part 2.](#)

About the Author